DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 203 316 CS 206 329

AUTHOR Meyers, Douglas
TITLE The Influence of Using Speaking as a Pre-Writing Activity on Community College Freshman Composition Pupils' Performance in Writing.
PUB DATE [79]
NOTE 36p.: Research prepared at the University of Maryland.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Freshmen; *Prewriting; *Speech Communication; Teaching Methods; Two Year Colleges; Writing (Composition); Writing Evaluation; *Writing Instruction; Writing Processes; *Writing Research
IDENTIFIERS *Talk Write Method

ABSTRACT

Freshman composition students at a community college in Maryland participated in a study to determine whether the talk-write method of writing instruction would have a more positive effect on freshman writing than would more conventional methods of instruction. Four classes totaling 58 students were randomly divided into an experimental and a control group. The experimental group used the talk-write method, a prewriting activity in which pairs of students talk over their writing plans with one another, while the control group received instruction in grammar, punctuation, and outlining. All students then wrote narrative, descriptive, expository, and argumentative essays, which were independently evaluated to find differences in the mean scores for each group. The papers were judged on 12 measures falling into the areas of general merit, mechanics, and total evaluation. The results revealed significant differences favoring the experimental group. The talk-write method produced statistically significant positive effects on students' performance in writing for eight out of the twelve measures considered, with the area of general merit benefiting the most. (HTH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED203316

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
[X] This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
[ ] Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

The Influence of Using Speaking as a Pre-Writing Activity on Community College Freshman Composition Pupils' Performance in Writing

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Douglas Meyers
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Douglas Meyers
Assistant Professor
Department of English
University of Maryland
College Park, Maryland 20742
telephone: (301) 454-2529

CS206329

Background

Although speaking activities are not part of the traditional paradigm of composition instruction, pedagogical theories and psychological findings--even homespun pieces of wisdom--indicate that speaking might be used to facilitate growth in writing. The interest in researching the relationship between speaking activities and writing has been a relatively minor trend, however, given all of the disciplinary divorces that have occurred during the last half century of our profession. Yet, the interest has been ongoing: the first volume of Research in the Teaching of English, in fact, included a piece (Tovatt and Miller, 1967) which discussed the attempt to use speaking activities to improve the writing of ninth-graders.

It is not at all an unusual objective to get students to write as easily as they talk, and at least one writing teacher's advice has been " . . . simply to write by ear; as you write your thoughts, listen in your mind to your own voice sounding the syllables." (Walcott, 1959) Klein (1977) argues that "the joint development of talking and writing is a desirable thing and a complementary thing," aphoristic indeed for teachers of the countless students who can orally discuss a topic with vigor, but when it comes to writing about it, are so phobic that they hardly write anything at all.

Falk (1979) insists that "Writing, as a written representation of language, and speech, as an oral representation, are different but co-equal means to express language," and it would surprise few persons that oracy is vital to literacy, a vitality well summarized by Moffett (1968):

> The best strategy for discussing a certain topic might be exactly the strategy the student should adopt in writing about that topic. And this is the point: through discussion, students can learn together about handling some of the problems of abstract writing, from how to assert single statements to how to phrase an attack on a subject. Interaction between discussion and writing is essential.

For the elementary school-aged child, the telling influence of speech on personal and social development has been well documented. Bruce et al. (1978), for instance, account for some of the difficulty children have in learning to write by attributing it to the disparity between their conversation and their written expression. King and Rentel (1979) discuss the necessity of sustained talk or narrative for young children preparing to write, and Kirkton (1971) has summarized that researchers in the elementary language arts recommend that children "talk out" prior to writing. Talking as a useful prelude to writing has been affirmed by Lopate (1978), and Folta (1969) praises it because it helps young writers to discriminate relevant details from irrelevant ones. One principle of the Story Workshop method of teaching children to write, as Schultz (1978) has described, requires a good deal of oral telling and oral reading as a way to harness and to study

> the relationship of the physical voice to writing, the extension of physical voice into another medium that employs symbols in print to enable another person to recognize, to 'hear,' and receive the voice of its communication.

For the secondary school-aged adolescent, recommendations have also been voiced for the practice of speaking as a meaningful pre-writing activity. Hannan (1975) advocates pre-writing oral brainstorming, as does Schwartz (1979), emphasizing its tension-reducing benefits. Tovatt (1965) has found that teen-agers who received composition instruction in which they were given an opportunity to speak their ideas into tape recorders and then to listen to them before writing profited by becoming more aware of their idiosyncratic skill weaknesses and by becoming more favorably disposed to the subject of English. (The procedure benefited most the students with poor verbal abilities.) Golub (1970), in experimental research with ninth-graders, contrasted an experimental group who practiced a methodology incorporating a controlled discussion prior to writing with a control group that did not discuss prior to writing. When writing performances were compared, the discussing group did significantly better. Wixon and Stone (1977) describe junior high school students' pairing up into teams prior to writing in which each teammate, prior to writing a sentence, says it out loud to the other, who may possibly want to talk about it more. This technique, they elaborate, promotes pupils' building their developing writing skills with speaking skills that are already fairly well-developed.

Graham (1971) has concluded that in the secondary school English classroom, oral activities exemplify the most natural alternative to the lecture method because

> . . . they represent the interest of the learner as opposed to those of the lecturer.

> . . . students come to the traditional lecture classroom engaged in personally motivated conversation and activity which must first be erased . . . [but] talk begins with student interest--where the action is.

At the college level, Kettner's thesis (1974) reviews the integral relationship between oral and written communication that may be exploited by coordinating writing and speaking in the Freshman Composition curriculum. Educators have discussed the cognitive benefit to skills. As early as 1933, Anderson wrote encouragingly of his experience teaching a college-level "Oral and Written English" course in which writing and speaking became structured complementary enterprises, while fifteen years later, Loy's "Written and Spoken English" course (1948), which embodied the same principle of writing and speaking functioning in tandem, was still labeled "a new approach."

Educators have also discussed the affective benefits that accrue from injecting speech into the composing model. Snipes (1973), for instance, insists that "to build from this oral self-confidence, the oral composer's first language base, is the job of the English teacher." Along the same line, Kelly (1972) recommends speaking activities in Freshman Composition for the feeling of liberation they yield when one uses one's "own voice." Macrorie (1976) considers peer-oriented oral activities prior to writing as a key to promoting a milieu that counters that stilted for-the-teacher-only prose that he calls "Engfish."

Many college compostion teachers advocate oral group-work

prior to writing. Laque and Sherwood (1977) note, for instance, that peer pairs work especially well, for students who are shy about talking in larger groups have a chance to share their ideas and to receive immediate feedback in such an intimate "group." O'Neal (1975) favorably relates having his college composition students pair up to talk and write together.

Overall, then, a recognition of the usefulness of speaking as a pre-writing activity has occurred at each educational level. A writing pedagogy, however, cannot simply be grounded in pragmatics. It requires a theory of learning and of language. Robert Zoellner, who coined the term "talk-write" in his 1969 College English monograph, and whose ideas in this area have been the most germaine to others interested in investigating the talk-write nexus, sets this theoretical foundation.

After observing that his own college composition pupils who had written poor essays could quite adeptly explain their ideas by speaking with him, Zoellner began to regard poor writing as maladaptive scribal behavior. This conception contrasts sharply with others' hypothesis that poor writing basically manifests inadequate thinking. Extrapolating the principle of operant conditioning to the composing process, Zoellner conceives of writing as a verbal conditioning by which systematic applications of reinforcers can influence the probability of various verbal behaviors. With this interpretation, and with the methodological emphasis firmly focussed on empirically observable activities and the act of writing, talk-write is based in behaviorism.

It is also built on the cornerstone of the concept of intermodal transfer, that skills in the vocal modality may be exploited by skills in the writing modality via a talk-write dialogue. Supporting this idea are the principles of intermodal integration, that the disjunction between writing and speaking can be overcome, minimizing the difference between the way both sound; and the principle of autogenetic specification, that talking can indeed be used as a specification for writing.

Although Zoellner does not detail the various similarities and differences between writing and speaking, many of his critics highlight the differences between the two. Certainly the disparities between writing and speech are real, and a discussion of these may be traced back as far as Book III of Aristotle's Rhetoric, where perhaps the traditional prejudice against incorporating speaking into the composition model originates.

Modern linguists and psychologists have revealed numerous diverse and complex differences between speaking and writing, and while a thorough review of these is beyond the scope of this research, a synthesis of the findings of Britton (1971), Bruce et al. (1978), Cayer and Sacks (1979), Emig (1976), Flower (1966), Golub (1969), Klein (1977), Portnoy (1973), Radcliffe (1972), Schallert (1977), Tovatt and Miller (1967), and Vygotsky (1962) permits a contrast of certain salient features. Speaking, exploiting the auditory modality, is a first-order language process which is normally (i. e., barring deafness or developmental disorders) early and informally acquired and which functions colloquially. Writing, on the other hand, ex-

ploits the visual modality, and as a second-order language process, is acquired later and with some kind of formal instruction and it serves literary purposes. Generally occurring in the presence of another person acting as audience, speaking promotes interaction and feedback (and is therefore not very autonomous, i. e., independent of context) while lasting only temporarily. Writing, however, usually sans immediate audience, incites less immediate feedback, possesses greater autonomy, and endures permanently. When compared to writing, speaking is more redundant, and its referents are usually more concrete; speaking possesses less syntactic complexity amd word diversity, though it does have prosodic features which writing lacks. These differences are summarized in Figure 1:

Figure 1

Contrastive Features of Speaking and Writing

FEATURE	SPEAKING	WRITING
Modality	auditory	visual
Process	first-order	second-order
Acquisition	early/informally	later/formally
Function	colloquial	literary
Interaction/ Feedback	greater	lesser
Autonomy	lesser	greater
Permanence	temporary	permanent
Redundancy	greater	lesser
Referent Concreteness	greater	lesser
Syntactic Complexity	lesser	greater
Word Diversity	lesser	greater
Prosodic Features	present	absent

None of these differences seriously jeopardizes the postulation that speaking and writing, rather than being two distinct systems of language, differ essentially in style and manner of encoding. To recognize these differences is to conclude that writing is not merely talk transcribed onto paper and that writing and talking are not identical. Neither of these conclusions invalidates the main premise of a talk-write pedagogy, that talking is a valuable form of pre-writing. Both speaking amd writing, to be sure, are originating communicative processes, and it is this similarity which may also enable one to be used in the service of the other.

Falk (1979) presents a model for learning to write that analogizes such learning to oral language acquisition. Just as spoken language is not acquired by mastering a set of discrete skills, writing cannot be learned by mastering autonomous parts of written form; rather, in Falk's words, writing is achieved

> . . . through the tacit internalization of patterns and principles that are acquired through extensive exposure to and practical experience with the use of language in actual, natural contexts and situations.

In the context of academic writing, immersion in language itself, allowing overt "teaching" and innate linguistic capacities to interact with one another, would seem an ideal setting for accomplishing the composing process.

Of all kinds of speech episodes, dyadic communication offers the optimum opportunity for using oral language skills to strengthen writing. As a face-to-face information-sharing

process engaging two persons who function both as speaker and listener, dyadic communication embodies the essence of all communication in its interaction and reciprocity, mutually benefiting both participants. Torrance (1971) has shown that generally, the dyad format fosters a greater willingness to undertake difficult tasks and that it encourages creative and original thinking. Simply, dyadic communication is a microcosm of what civilization is founded upon, namely, the impulse to work together.

Rosenbaum (1973) notes that peer-mediated learning, of which the talk-write dyad is a version, is relatively independent from specific course content, but this instructional arrangement accommodates especially well to composition teaching. The context of classmates conversing about writing topics typifies the setting described by communication theorists as effective and emotionally rewarding. First, as Triandis' research shows (1960), when two communicators are cognitively similar--oriented in like ways to the significant aspects of their environment--communication is likely to succeed. In the "environment" of a specific writing assignment, it may be presumed that students share like concerns. Furthermore, as Triandis' work also demonstrates, communicators' using similar language promotes clarity and affinity. In the talk-write communication dyad, it is probable that peers use the same kind of language when addressing one another. In sum, the talk-write communication dyad exploits the principle of homophily, that the more similar two people are, the more likely it is that their efforts to communicate will succeed.

Communication theorists also focus on the positive effects that feedback usually yields. By increasing the effectiveness of communication, as Leavitt and Mueller (1951) detail, feedback increases one's certainty that one is getting one's point across, thereby increasing one's confidence as a communicator. That the feedback is positive augments its potency. Positive feedback definitely maintains--if not increases--communication, as Verplanck (1955) notes. In addition, positive feedback contributes to emotional stability and mental development, for as Watzlawick et al. (1962) report, this kind of confirmation from others leads to confirmation of self. Since one's self-esteem as a communicator carries decisive impact on one's ability to communicate, as Brooks and Platz (1968) recognize, initial success talking could easily facilitate later success writing.

Mitchell and Taylor (1979) believe that the audience, however intangible, always motivates writing. In the talk-write model, this is deliberately and consciously so. Although growth in writing involves internalizing the audience, of course, an actual listening person may be the perfect intermediary for writers unable to traverse alone the egocentric route from themselves to a totally abstract other. This kind of dialogical navigation may be exactly what their monological full-fledged writing needs.

Dyadic communication is also valuable for making students responsible for their own learning and responsive to one another. This kind of collaborative learning encourages students to unite as what Kelly (1972) calls a "community of learners," cooperative rather than competitive. It helps to make writing

"real," according to O'Neal (1975), by removing it from sequestration and placing it in a public arena. It promotes the kind of experiential learning described by Rogers (1969) as personally involving, self-initiated, self-evaluated, and pervasive.

With this background, this study sought to determine whether a methodology incorporating speaking as a pre-writing activity would have any significant positive effect on the writing performance of community college freshman composition students. The specific hypothesis being testedwas the following:

> In each of the rhetorical modes of discourse (description, narration, exposition, and argumentation), the writing performance of students participating in the talk-write methodology will be superior to that of students instructed with traditional methodology.
> A. Superiority will occur in general merit.
> B. Superiority will occur in mechanics.
> C. Superiority will occur in total evaluation.

The limitations applied were as follows:

Rhetorical modes of discourse are part of the scholarly tradition based on the idea that all writing may be classified on the basis of four forms, each possessing its own content, as follows: description--objects of sense experience; narration--events organized in time and space; exposition--ideas; and argumentation--issues.

Writing performance refers to a completed written essay, produced by subjects, initially 100 and finally 58 day-students enrolled in Freshman Composition at Prince George's Community College, Maryland. Subjects averaged 19 years and 3 months of age, and almost all reported just having graduated from high school the June preceding the Fall 1979 Semester, when

this research was conducted. Overwhelmingly (95%) they resided in Prince George's County, Maryland, and the great majority (88%) attended the College on a full-time basis although many (82%) also worked an average of 20 hours per week. Three-quarters expressed an intention to transfer to a four-year institution of higher learning after finishing at the College, while the remaining quarter were enrolled in a career curriculum terminating with an A. A. degree. Female students accounted for 56% of the sample and males for 44%; whites numbered 77%, blacks 22%, and Orientals 1%. On the average, these students had earned a grade of "C" in English in the twelfth grade, and all but three spoke English as their native language. These subjects were enrolled in four intact freshman composition classes that were randomly divided into two groups, control and experimental. Two instructors--both full professors with equivalent years of teaching experience--each taught one section of each group.

For the independent variables, traditional methodology refers to teacher-conducted lessons with the entire class on the principles of grammar, punctuation and outlining, typical activities for Freshman Composition. Talk-write methodology refers to practices embodying Zoellner's theoretical ideas (1969) and Radcliffe's procedural recommendations (1972). It engages pupils in pre-writing activity requiring them to team up in communication dyads in order to converse with one another about what they are planning to write. This partnering occurs during a class period between when the writing assignment has been specified and when the completed essay is due. For ap-

proximately twenty minutes per role, each pupil is both the talker-writer (for one's own paper) and the listener (for another's paper) during one class meeting. After having assumed the role of talker-writer, the pupil takes five minutes to note in writing the ideas and suggestions that have emerged from the conversation which may be helpful in composing the finished essay. As talker-writer, the expectation is that one speak about one's topic, and that as listener, the expectation is that one be attentive, ask questions, and provide positive feedback, behaviors united by the guiding principle of reinforcement. In this study, students were informed of these expectations ahead of time, by a handout explaining the talk-write dyad.

The dependent variable, student writing performance, was assessed from a team of three outside raters' evaluations of essays using the Diederich Scale for Grading English Composition, which was modified by the researcher to eliminate the category of "Handwriting." As Figure 2 shows, the Diederich Scale is a device containing seven essay features: 1)quality and development of ideas; 2)organization, relevance, and movement; 3)style, flavor, and individuality; 4)wording and phrasing; 5)grammar and sentence structure; 6)punctuation; and 7)spelling. Each of these features may be characterized along a five-point scoring line, yielding scores of 5, 4, 3, 2, or 1 (except in the case of the first two features, which Diederich considers so substantially more important than the others that their values are doubled). The first four features' scores added together are the general merit subtotal; the next three features' summed scores are mechanics; all scores taken together make up

the total evaluation. For this study, essays were evaluated by a team of three University of Maryland Freshman Composition teaching assistants who had successfully participated in a training workshop on the utilization of the Diederich Scale.

Figure 2

The Modified Diederich Scale for Grading English Composition*

ESSAY NUMBER_____ READER_____

	LOW		MIDDLE		HIGH	
Quality and development of ideas	2	4	6	8	10	
Organization, relevance, movement	2	4	6	8	10	
Style, flavor, individuality	1	2	3	4	5	
Wording & Phrasing	1	2	3	4	5	_____ subtotal
Grammar & Sentence Structure	1	2	3	4	5	
Punctuation	1	2	3	4	5	
Spelling	1	2	3	4	5	_____ subtotal
						_____ TOTAL

* From Diederich, Paul B. Measuring Growth in English. Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1974, p. 54; modified by the researcher to eliminate the original's category of "Handwriting."

Method

To test the hypothesis that in each of the rhetorical modes of discourse (description, narration, exposition, and argumentation), the writing performance of students participating in the talk-write methodology would be superior to that of students instructed with traditional methodology and that this superiority would occur in general merit, mechanics, and total evaluation, the non-equivalent groups design was employed, as follows:

$$S - R_1 \begin{cases} P_1 - X_1 - D_{1, 2, 3, 4} \\ P_1 - X_2 - D_{1, 2, 3, 4} \end{cases}$$

During the first day of class, in August 1979, all subjects--students enrolled in four intact Freshman Composition classes (two experimental and two control)--wrote diagnostic essays for approximately thirty minutes. In addition to providing information to the instructors, for the purposes of this research, the diagnostic essays were evaluated by the team of outside readers as a pre-test in order to ascertain whether the experimental and control groups had any pre-existing differences in writing performance. It was not expected that any significant differences would occur, for at Prince George's Community College, no attempt is made to register Freshman Composition students homogenously by ability. Rather, pupils schedule themselves for classes whose meeting times are convenient for them. (In all likelihood, the fact that pupils are "average" also limits the regression threat to the internal validity of this study.) It was thought judicious, nevertheless, to ensure that any pre-existing differences be accounted

for, as the nonequivalent groups design necessitates.

For the rest of the semester--including the thirteen weeks of the experimental period--all students used Writing With A Purpose (McCrimmon, 1976) as their textbook and followed a course syllabus designed by the instructors to fulfill the objectives of Freshman Composition. All group discussions and non-essay assignments served as a basis for assessment for the instructors rather than for the researcher, and while the instructors graded and returned all essays to their student-authors, these grades were never made known to the researcher.

Each class convened for two-and-a-half hours per week. Because of a large drop-out rate, the size of the research sample diminished throughout the semester. Withdrawing from class at the College may occur at any time and incurs no academic penalty. This mortality threat was beyond the researcher's control, and while detrimental to the amount of data collected, it is by no means atypical of the College's Freshman Composition course, which many pupils repeat in order to pass.

The control group and the experimental group engaged in differentiated activities on four days (class meeting numbers 10, 18, 24, and 32). Immediately preceding each of these dates, instructors informed students of their essay assignments, which required finished compositions averaging 750 words long. The sequence of assignments, following the traditional order of increasing difficulty, went from 1) description to 2) narration, to 3) exposition (specified as comparison-and-contrast) to 4) argumentation.

On these four days, the control group pupils participated

in teacher-led lessons on the principles of grammar, punctuation, and outlining. Pupils remained seated in rows, directing their attention to the front of the room to the teacher who, using the blackboard and/or the textbook, explained the material at hand. Occasionally students completed exercises at their desks, and these were later collectively checked.

On the identical four days, the experimental group pupils participated in the talk-write methodology. Students paired up with one another in order to converse about the subject matter about which they were planning to write their essays. In order to facilitate these conversations, desk-top chairs were arranged so that pupils in each dyad faced one another. Pupils placed pens and paper on their desks, and while some brought papers on which ideas were already jotted down, most did not. The handout describing the talk-write dyad format that the students had read beforehand advocated a plan in which one person did most of the talking for a twenty-minute chunk of time while the other did most of the listening and reinforcing, but the students' communication dyads assumed the form of more natural conversations, with a more evenly distributed give-and-take between both participants occurring throughout the entire conversation. This naturalness was interpreted as an asset, and no attempt was made to implement the original distinct roles. Occasionally during the conversations, students would note something in writing, but most notes were taken at the conclusion of the conversation, after approximately forty minutes.

The initial plan for the communication dyads included

having pupils select different partners for each pairing. Thus, instructors were asked to request pupils to choose new conversation partners, but some students did not cooperate with this request, preferring to remain with their original partners.

On the days following these classes essays were collected. As with the previously collected diagnostic essays, every composition was photocopied before being marked and coded with a number replacing any of the original identifying information.

Results

The primary objective of this study involved determining whether using speaking as a pre-writing activity has any significant positive effect on the writing performance of community college pupils enrolled in Freshman Composition. The mean scores of the two groups--the (talk-write) experimental and the (traditional) control--were compared for the Diederich Scale variables of general merit, mechanics, and total evaluation, for four different essay assignments--description, narration, exposition, and argumentation. Because having equivalent group size is an advantage when making this kind of comparison, several essays in each set were randomly eliminated in order to equate the two group sizes for each assignment.

To ascertain whether any significant pre-existing differences between these groups' writing performance would be a factor in interpreting the results, a directional t test was performed on the data from the pre-test diagnostic essays. It was determined, at the .05 level of confidence, that the differences between these groups' mean scores for general merit,

mechanics, and total evaluation were not statistically significant and would therefore play no role in interpreting all subsequent results. The data from which this conclusion is formulated appear in Table 1.

Table 1

Comparison of Means Between Experimental and Control Groups on the Pre-Test Diagnostic Essay

Diederich Scale Component	Group	N	Mean	SD	Difference Between Means	t Value
General Merit	Experimental	25	15.29	3.30	.05	.05[a]
	Control	25	15.24	3.69		
Mechanics	Experimental	25	9.69	1.77		
	Control	25	10.17	1.83	.48	.92[a]
Total Evaluation	Experimental	25	24.98	4.07		
	Control	25	25.41	4.14	.41	.36[a]

[a] Not significant at the .05 level of confidence; $t_{crit} = 1.68$ (48 df)

For the first essay, the description essay, an analysis of the differences between the two groups' mean scores, using the t statistic with a .05 confidence level, revealed that for

mechanics only was the difference statistically significant. Table 2 summarizes these findings.

Table 2

Comparison of Means Between Experimental and Control Groups on the Description Essay Assignment

Diederich Scale Component	Group	N	Mean	SD	Difference Between Means	t Value
General Merit	Experimental	37	17.96	2.50		
	Control	37	18.40	4.07	.44	.52
Mechanics	Experimental	37	11.36	1.58	.72	1.76[a]
	Control	37	10.64	1.99		
Total Evaluation	Experimental	37	29.32	2.86	.28	.27
	Control	37	29.04	5.13		

[a] $p \leq .05$; $t_{crit} = 1.67$ (72 df)

For the mechanics feature of a descriptive essay, then, the null hypothesis was rejected; for other features, it was not.

For the second essay, the narration essay, an analysis of the differences between the two groups' mean scores, using the t statistic with a .05 confidence level, revealed that for general merit and total evaluation the difference was

statistically significant. Table 3 summarizes these findings.

Table 3

Comparison of Means Between Experimental and Control Groups on the Narration Essay Assignment

Diederich Scale Component	Group	N	Mean	SD	Difference Between Means	t Value
General Merit	Experimental	34	19.03	3.24	1.58	2.08[a]
	Control	34	17.45	2.82		
Mechanics	Experimental	34	11.19	1.48	.12	.30
	Control	34	11.07	1.75		
Total Evaluation	Experimental	34	30.22	3.34	1.70	1.84[a]
	Control	34	28.52	4.00		

[a] $p \leq .05$; $t_{crit} = 1.67$ (66 df)

For the general merit feature of a narrative essay, and for its total evaluation, then, the null hypothesis was rejected; for mechanics, it was not.

For the third essay, the exposition essay, an analysis of the differences between the two groups' mean scores, using the t statistic with a .05 confidence level, revealed, again, that for general merit and total evaluation the difference was

statistically significant. Table 4 summarizes these findings.

Table 4

Comparison of Means Between Experimental and Control Groups on the Exposition Essay Assignment

Diederich Scale Component	Group	N	Mean	SD	Difference Between Means	t Value
General Merit	Experimental	29	20.08	2.76	2.20	2.89[a]
	Control	29	17.88			
Mechanics	Experimental	29	11.21	1.02	.36	.88
	Control	29	10.85	2.09		
Total Evaluation	Experimental	29	31.29	3.48	2.55	2.50[a]
	Control	29	28.74	4.60		

[a] $p \leq .05$; $t_{crit} = 1.67$ (56 df)

For the general merit feature of an expository essay, and for its total evaluation, then, the null hypothesis was rejected; for mechanics, it was not.

For the final essay, the argumentation essay, an analysis of the differences between the two groups' mean scores, using the t statistic with a .05 confidence level, revealed that for all variables--general merit, mechanics, and total evaluation--the difference was statistically significant. Table 5 summarizes these findings.

Table 5

Comparison of Means Between Experimental and Control Groups on the Argumentation Essay Assignment

Diederich Scale Component	Group	N	Mean	SD	Difference Between Means	t Value
General Merit	Experimental	26	19.14	3.57	1.72	1.83[a]
	Control	26	17.42	2.94		
Mechanics	Experimental	26	11.20	1.26	1.02	2.37[a]
	Control	26	10.18	1.68		
Total Evaluation	Experimental	26	30.35	4.39	2.75	2.18[a]
	Control	26	27.60	4.38		

[a] $p \leq .05$; $t_{crit} = 1.68$ (50 df)

For all features of the argumentative essay, then, its general merit, mechanics, and total evaluation, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Summary

An analysis of the differences between the mean scores for four sets of compositions' general merit, mechanics, and total evaluation was performed to test the difference in writing performance between the experimental (talk-write) group and the control (traditional) group. The results revealed significant differences favoring the experimental group (and therefore permitting rejection of the null hypotheses) as follows: for description, in mechanics; for narration and exposition, in general merit and total evaluation; and for argumentation, in

general merit, mechanics, and total evaluation. Table 6 summarizes these findings.

Table 7

Summary of Results

Diederich Scale Component	Essay Assignment			
	Description	Narration	Exposition	Argumentation
General Merit	-	a	a	a
Mechanics	a	-	-	a
Total Evaluation	-	a	a	a

[a]Significant at the .05 confidence level

Discussion

Using speaking as a pre-writing activity in a community college Freshman Composition course produced statistically significant positive effects on students' performance in writing for eight out of the twelve measures considered.

The composition feature profiting more was general merit. Because general merit's four components are "naturals" to benefit from using speaking to improve writing, this outcome is not surprising. Speaking about a topic ahead of time means devoting and exchanging thought to and about it that will later be written; it also means uttering a verbal substratum that will be rhetorically useful for communicating these thoughts on paper. These activities promote the production of writing that embodies what one wishes to communicate and they therefore enhance the quality of the first component of general merit--quality and development of ideas. Via the transactional inter-

action of a person-to-person conversation, spoken communication can be shaped into effective written expression. With an audience providing feedback and helping to check any conceptual gaps, irrelevancies or redundancies, the second component--organization, relevance, movement--is also strengthened: a speaker carefully explicating points and relating them to a main theme in order to meet the needs of an actual listening audience likely performs the same service for the more abstract reading addressee later. The criterion for a high score on the third general merit component--style flavor, individuality--is that one sound sincere and candid. Engaging in a communication dyad apparently fosters this, for it is difficult to produce "committee-ese" when conversing with a supportive peer, a fact that discourages stilted writing. Similarly, a concomitant positive effect occurs for general merit's fourth component--wording and phrasing--for any obfuscatory details can be noted in speaking and therefore can be clarified by the time of writing, promoting an exact written usage of words and phrases. For a combination of possible reasons, then, this study indicates that using speaking as a pre-writing activity benefits an essay's general merit.

This observation seems especially true for writing done in the modes of narration, exposition, and argumentation, for which the results of this study reveal a statistically significant positive effect. In each of these modes, the writer is challenged by a considerable content to conceive and by many details to permute. In the descriptive mode, on the other hand, for which the results reveal no statistically significant

effect, it might be postulated that the content, prior to writing, is more or less pre-formed: the task of writing description requires not so much invention as it does a verbal recreation of phenomena. This re-creating might be refined, of course, but apparently it is not subject to the overall amelioration delivered to the other modes by using speaking as a pre-writing activity. (There is also the possibility that the nonsignificant outcome is not a function of the descriptive mode *per se*, but occurs as a consequence of the fact that this was the first communication dyad and that it needed to be practiced in order to yield the positive effects that it later did.)

Although the mode of description manifested no significant difference between the experimental group and the control group for *general merit*, the results of this study do reveal a statistically positive effect on the description essays' *mechanics*--grammar and sentence structure, punctuation, and spelling. To explain this seemingly anomalous outcome, it can be theorized that writing the "content" of the description essay was made less difficult (though not improved) by having earlier talked it out. At the time of the written composing, therefore, pupils could channel energy which is usually reserved for generating information into attending to these formal concerns, composing essays that demonstrate a marked superiority in using the conventions of written literacy.

In an analogous manner, for the most complex assignment--argumentation--it may be conjectured that the significant positive effect on writing *mechanics* was facilitated by the

fact that students were placed in a "comfort zone" with their content by having previously articulated it. It is likely, for instance, that any nagging doubts about the supports for one's argument would be greatly reduced during a conversation in which one voiced and discussed these proofs. This confidence with the content, then, would enable pupils to devote more effort to ensure that the mechanical aspects of their compositions were correct.

Apparently for writing in the middle ground of complexity--in the modes of exposition and narration--although a positive difference exists between the experimental group and the control group, this difference is not great enough to be statistically significant.

For these two modes of discourse--exposition and narration--plus that of argumentation, using speaking as a pre-writing activity produced a statistically significant positive effect on the essays' total evaluation. For argumentation, given the two statistically significant subtotal results, the outcome was inevitable. For narration and exposition, the fact that total evaluation was carried in favor of the experimental group is a result of 1) the modified Diederich Scale's weighting general merit twice as important as mechanics, and for these modes, statistical significance occurred for the former but not for the latter; and 2) the fact that although mechanics' effects were not statistically significant, they were nevertheless positive.

It can be concluded, then, that using speaking as a pre-writing activity produces significant positive effects for each

of the modes of discourse, with these benefits increasing throughout the sequence of rhetorical modes, as follows: for description--one benefit, in mechanics; for narration and exposition--two benefits, in general merit and total evaluation; for argumentation--three benefits, in general merit, mechanics, and total evaluation. Whether this cumulative progression is a function of the natures of the rhetorical modes of discourse or occurs as a consequence of an increased potency of the communication dyad produced by practice remains for other research to determine.

The results of this study support Robert Zoellner's hypothesis (1969) that a " . . . preponderant skill in the vocal modality can be exploited by means of the talk-write dialogue to achieve . . . an increase in skill in the scribal modality." The theoretical cornerstone on which the practice of using speaking as a pre-writing activity is built, the principle of intermodal transfer, is also supported. Although writing is hardly ever just speaking transferred onto paper--certainly the completed essays produced during this experiment were not simply the communication dyads' speaking recorded verbatim on paper--it can be deduced that the differences between the two modalities are not sufficiently large to preclude one's being used in the service of the other.

The limitations of a study of this nature must be noted. The results cannot be generalized beyond the particular population of interest, adolescents enrolled in a regular Freshman Composition class during the fall semester at a suburban com-

munity college. Rather than only offering definitive answers, the results of this research raise other questions. In this regard, the following possibilities are proposed for promising future investigation.

1. This study should be replicated to measure changes that occur in writing composed during class time. All essays collected for this study consisted of compositions that students had written outside of class, submitting them at least five days after they were originally assigned. It is recommended that this time factor be investigated using procedures that have pupils speak about what they are planning to write and then to proceed more immediately to write, in class.

2. In this study, experimental treatment was an isolated phenomenon occurring on four pre-determined occasions; the study, then, should be replicated in a writing curriculum in which speaking is an integrated and pervasive component. Investigation is recommended for the effects of an infusion of other kinds of oral activities (e.g., using speaking as a post-writing activity to facilitate revision) into the composing process.

3. This study should be replicated with the assignments in the four modes of discourse rearranged in a manner other than the present traditional sequence. Changing the order of these assignments would help to determine whether the effects noted in the present study are a function of the specific nature of a certain mode or whether they occur as a consequence of chronology (i. e., the history of the practice devoted to the talk-write communication dyad.)

4. To provide information that would maximize the effectiveness of the talk-write methodology, this study should be replicated to compare the effects of assigning different partners for each communication dyad versus maintaining one pair of partners throughout all communication dyads.

5. Although this particular research was conducted at the college freshman level, other research suggests that using speaking as a pre-writing activity could be efficacious at the elementary and secondary school levels. Thus, this study should be replicated with students enrolled at other educational levels.

6. To explore the possibility of using the talk-write methodology of coordinately developing speaking and writing skills for persons whose native language is not English, this study should be replicated with English-as-a-second language pupils.

7. This study should be replicated with students who are speakers of non-standard dialects of American English to determine whether these pupils, for whom traditional methodologies are often ineffective, can strengthen their writing skills by participating in the talk-write methodology.

References

Anderson, H. R. An Experiment in Oral and Written English. School and Society, 1933, 38, 808-9.

Aristotle. Rhetoric. Trans. Lane Cooper. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1932.

Borden, G. A., R. B. Gregg, and T. G. Grove. Speech Behavior and Human Interaction. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1969.

Britton, J. Talking to Learn. In Language, the Learner and the School. Ed. D. Barnes, J. Britton, and H. Rosen. Revised ed. Baltimore: Penguin, 1971, pp. 79-115.

----------, et al. The Development of Writing Abilities (11-18). London: Macmillan Education, 1975.

Brooks, W. D., and S. M. Platz. The Effects of Speech Training Upon Self-Concept as a Communicator. Speech Teacher, 1968, 17, 44-49.

Bruce, B., et al. A Cognitive Science Approach to Writing, Technical Report No. 89. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Bolt, Beranek and Newman, 1978. (ED 157 039)

Campbell, C. A. Think-Talk-Write: A Behavioristic Pedagogy for Scribal Fluency. College English, 1969, 31, 208-15.

Cayer, R. L., and R. K. Sacks. Oral and Written Discourse of Basic Writers. Research in the Teaching of English, 1979, 13, 121-28.

Connors, R. J. The Difference Between Speech and Writing: Ethos, Pathos and Logos. College Composition and Communication, 1979, 30 285-90.

Daly, J. A., and M. D. Miller. Apprehension of Writing as a Predictor of Message Intensity. Journal of Psychology, 1975, 89, 175-77.

Emig, J. Writing as a Mode of Learning. College Composition and Communication, 1976, 27, 122-28.

Falk, J. S. Language Acquisition and the Teaching and Learning of Writing. College English, 1979, 41, 436-47.

Flower, F. D. Language and Education. London: Longmans, Green, 1966.

Folta, B. [illegible] Writing as Leading the Reader to a Discovery. 59th Annual Convention of the National Council of Teachers of English, Washington, D. C., November 1969. (ED 039 227)

Golub, L. S. Linguistic Structures in Students' Oral and Written Discourse. Research in the Teaching of English, 1969, 3, 70-85.

----------. A Model for Teaching Composition. Journal of Educational Research, 1970, 64, 115-18.

Graham, M. R. Talk-Drama as an Alternative to the Lecture. In Lecture Alternatives in Teaching English. Ed. S. Judy. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Campus Publishers, 1971, pp. 25-38.

Half Our Future: A Report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England). London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1963.

Hannan, D. J. Learning to Juggle Oranges: The Pre-Writing Experience. 5th National Council of Teachers of English Secondary School Conference, Seattle. 11-12 March 1977. (ED 139 028)

Kelly, L. From Diabgue to Discourse. Glenview, Illinois, Scott, Foresman, 1972.

Kettner, J. S. Z. Oral Communication in the Freshman English Course. M. A. Thesis, Texas A & M University, 1974. (ED 103 889)

King, M. L., and V. Rentel. Toward a Theory of Early Writing Development. Research in the Teaching of English, 1979, 13, 243-53.

Kirkton, C. M. NCTE/ERIC Report: "Learning to Write: Steps in the Process." Elementary English, 1971, 48, 303-11.

Klein, M. L. Talk in the Language Arts Classroom. Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1977.

Laque, C. F., and P. A. Sherwood. A Laboratory Approach to Writing. Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1977.

Leavitt, H. J., and R. A. H. Mueller. Some Effects of Feedback on Communication. Human Relations, 1951, 4, 401-10.

Lopate, P. Helping Young Children to Write. In Research on Composing. Ed. C. R. Cooper and L. Odell. Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1978, pp. 135-49.

Loy, W. D. A New Approach. College English, 1948, 9, 206-12.

Macrorie, K. Telling Writing. 2nd ed., revised. Rochelle Park, New Jersey: Hayden, 1976.

McCrimmon, J. M. Writing With a Purpose. 6th ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976.

Mitchell, R., and M. Taylor. The Integrating Perspective: An Audience Response Model for Writing. College English, 1979, 41, 247-71.

Moffett, J. A Student-Centered Language Arts Curriculum, Grades K-13: A Handbook for Teachers. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 196[illegible].

O'Neal, M. J. Dramatic Situations for Pre-Writing and Writing Assignments. 26th Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, St. Louis, Missouri. 13-15 March 1975. (ED 103 865)

Portnoy, S. A Comparison of Oral and Written Verbal Behavior. In Studies in Verbal Behavior: An Empirical Approach. Ed. K. Salzinger and R. S. Feldman. New York: Permagon, 1973, pp. 99-151.

Radcliffe, T. Talk-Write Composition: A Theoretical Model Proposing the Use of Speech to Improve Writing. Research in the Teaching of English, 1972, 6, 187-99.

Rogers, C. R. Freedom to Learn. Columbus, Ohio: Charles R. Merrill, 1969.

Rosenbaum, P. S. Peer-Mediated Instruction. New York: Teachers College, 1973.

Sarbin, T. R. On Zoellnerism: Notes on Extending the Talk-Write Metaphor. College English, 1969, 30, 645-48.

Schallert, D. L., et al. An Analysis of Differences Between Written and Oral Language, Technical Report No. 29. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Bolt, Beranek and Newman, 1977. (ED 144 038)

Schultz, J. Story Workshop: Writing from Start to Finish. In Research on Composing. Eds. C. R. Cooper and L. Odell. Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1978, pp. 151-87.

Schwartz, M. Talking Your Way Into Writing. English Journal, 1979, 68, 42-44.

Snipes, W. C. Oral Composing as an Approach to Writing. College Composition and Communication, 1973, 24, 200-05.

Torrance, E. P. Stimulation, Enjoyment, and Orginality in Dyadic Creativity. Journal of Educational Psychology, 1971, 62, 45-48.

Tovatt, A. Oral-Aural -Visual Stimuli for Teaching Composition. English Journal, 1965, 54, 191-94.

----------, and E. L. Miller. The Sound of Writing. Research in the Teaching of English, 1967, 1, 176-89.

Triandis, H. C. Cogntive Similarity and Communication in a Dyad. Human Relations, 1960, 13, 175-83.

Verplanck, W. S. The Control of the Contents of Conversation: Reinforcement of Statements of Opinion. Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 1955, 51, 668-76.

Vygotsky, L. S. Language and Thought. Ed. and Trans. E. Hanfmann and G. Vakar. Cambridge, Massachusetts: M. I. T., 1962.

Walcott, F. G. Writing by Ear. Education, 1959, 80, 189.

Watzlawick, P., J. H. Beavin, and D. D. Jackson. Pragmatics of Human Communication. New York: W. W. Norton, 1967.

Wixon, V., and P. Stone. Getting It Out, Getting it Down: Adapting Zoellner's Talk-Write. English Journal, 1977, 66, 70-73.

Zoellner, R. Talk-Write: A Behavioral Approach for Composition. College English, 1969, 30, 267-320.

----------. Response. College English, 1969, 30, 667-68.

----------. Mentalizing S. R. Rodent. College English, 1969, 31, 215-30.